

Ottoboni's libretto adds extra characters – to provide dramatic depth but also to add extra layers of meaning to Judith's actions and strength – most notably in comparison to Ozia's desire to capitulate and the Captain's near betrayal to join the victor. Scarlatti's music is in keeping with the stylistic trends of the times in its alternation of aria and recitative. Unlike in the dramatic works of his successors such as Handel and Vivaldi, however, Scarlatti's arias are more varied. The da capo aria structure is common, but there are also several ensembles and strophic arias. One of the most beautiful is the Captain's aria that concludes Act 1.

In form, it is a da capo aria with a clear A-B-A format. However, there are two complete verses set to the format. The 2nd verse is found only in the manuscript in Morristown and is not in the Naples manuscript. The climactic scene in which Judith seduces and then kills Holofernes is movingly composed to music that reflects her emotions fully. In fact, the music seems to tell us that Judith hesitates and might actually feel some attraction towards Olofernes but realizes she must do her duty. While Holofernes is indeed the "bad guy" in the opera, there is an appealing strength to him not always seen in somebody clearly the villain or oppressor. Compared to Ozia and the Captain, Judith must have admired his courage and decisiveness. Trust and faith are also at the heart of this drama – in which Ozia, The Captain, and Sacerdote are filled with doubts and fears while Holofernes and Judith, though on opposite sides, are filled with faith and trust in themselves as well as, for Judith, in her God.

## Collaborators



Jude M. Pfister, D.Litt, Curator, Morristown NHP & Maestro Robert Butts, Ph.D., The Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey, pictured with the original, unedited *La Giuditta*, 1693



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**MNHP & BONJ present**

Alessandro Scarlatti's 1693

# *La Giuditta*



**Sunday, May 1, 2016  
at 3:00 PM**



## Late 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Opera

In 1693, in official Catholic Rome, the city lamented the recently deceased exiled Catholic queen of Sweden, Christina. The dazzling salons she held in her apartments at the Palazzo Corsini were the highlight of the cultural scene in a city of culture. This Swedish outpost "became the leading salon in Rome, the rendezvous of prelates, scholars, composers, nobles, and foreign diplomats." Among the composers who gathered at her salons were Alessandro Scarlatti and Arcangelo Corelli. It was here at the palazzo that Alessandro Scarlatti completed work on the first version of his oratorio *La Giuditta*.

Opera, or oratorio, was still an emerging genre in the seventeenth century owing much to earlier choral and vesper traditions. By 1700, opera was the most fashionable and dynamic part of the classical music repertory in Italy. This popularity existed despite the accession of Pope Innocent XII in 1691 (died 1700), who was an outspoken critic of opera. In practice though, the pope had little impact on the development of opera. In 1700, Venice had sixteen opera houses where nearly one hundred operas were performed over forty years; while Naples and Rome were similarly provided for. In Rome, shortly after 1700 Scarlatti himself was named choir master to Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni.

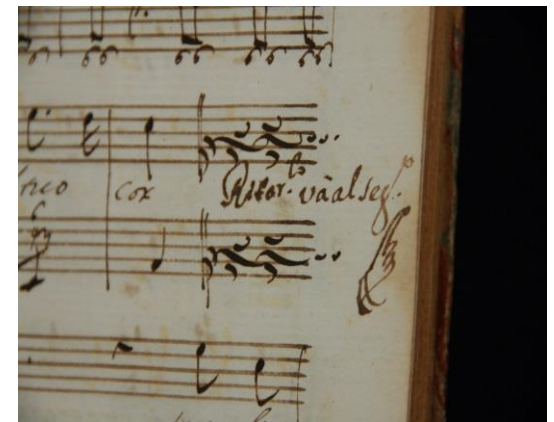
## Alessandro Scarlatti

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) was one of the most significant composers of the Baroque Era, spending much of his life in Naples and Rome. He was especially famed and influential for his operas and oratorios. His opera/oratorio *La Giuditta* was a major work produced in 1693 to a libretto by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni. A manuscript of this work exists in the archives of Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella in Naples, Italy. Amazingly, however, an earlier and more complete manuscript complete with dedicatory letter exists not in Italy where Scarlatti lived and worked his entire life – but in The Lloyd W. Smith Rare Book and Manuscript Collection at the Washington Headquarters Museum in Morristown, New Jersey. The manuscript was purchased by Lloyd Smith at auction in 1927 and donated to the Morristown NHP in 1955.

## La Giuditta


*La Giuditta* is the story of Judith (Giuditta) and Holofernes (Olofernes). The authenticity and biblical inclusion of the Book of Judith is debated, but the story itself has been well known. It found special favor in the 17th and 18th century, being set by several composers – famously including Mozart and Vivaldi as well as Scarlatti. The story behind Judith and Holofernes comes from the Bible – the deuterocanonical book of Judith. The Bible tells us that the King of Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar, sent his general, Holofernes, to subdue his enemies, the Jews. The Jews are besieged in Bethulia and rapidly losing all hope of victory. Famine further undermines their courage and they begin considering surrender.


Judith, a strikingly beautiful widow, overhears plans for surrender and decides to "deliver the city." She creeps into the Assyrian camp, seduces Holofernes with her beauty, waits until he is thoroughly drunk, and cuts off his head. The Jews regain their courage, raid the Assyrian camp and drive the enemy away.




Detail from the manuscript, showing a pointing finger highlighting a notation.

## For More Information

 [baroqueorchestra.org](http://baroqueorchestra.org)

 [morristownNHPmuseum.blogspot.com](http://morristownNHPmuseum.blogspot.com)

 [nps.gov/morr](http://nps.gov/morr)